dedicated District Passport Cells in those districts where the number of applications exceeds 10,000 per year. The forms would be scrutinised and documents checked by the District Passport Cells and the speed post centres and then forwarded to the Passport Office who will issue the passports. The scheme has already been launched in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim and Nagaland at the district level and at the designated speed psot passport collection centres throughout the country.

Afghanistan's request to raise National Army

2716. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Afghanistan has formally requested India for assistance in raising its National Army;

(b) whether Government have agreed to meet this request of Afghanistan; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) Government of India is committed to provide humantarian relief. Project and other assistance for the rcconstrution and rchablilitation in Afghanistan. During the visit of H.E. Mr. Hamid Karzai to India, both countries identifed the areas of Health, Education, Information Technology, Industrial development, Public Transport and Training as priority areas for bilateral cooperation. We have also been an active participant in all international efforts aimed at reconstruction in Afghanistan. Government took part in an international meeting held in Geneva on 3rd April, 2002, to discuss international cooperation in raising an Afghan national army. We offered Indian capabilities for technical cooperation in this field.